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THE SOIL CONSERVATION PROGRAM  
IN THE COTTON BELT

A radio talk by Cully A. Cobb, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour, Wednesday, March 25, 1936, by WMAL and 49 other stations affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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Thank you, Ken. As you say, this is a talk especially for Southern farmers. But I think it may interest most farmers in other parts of the country, too, who are busy studying their soil conservation problems. So I know you people in other parts of the country won't mind if I start right in and talk about the South to people in the South.

Most of you are familiar with the general outlines of that program, which provides for payments to farmers who in 1936 meet conditions specified for soil conservation and soil improvement.

Farmers, you will remember, played a big part in working out the program. Possibly many of you were at the Memphis conference early this month, or had your direct representative there. Three similar conferences were held in other sections of the country. Then the Adjustment Administration took the recommendations made at each of the meetings and fitted them into a national program.

Of course no region got all that it wanted, or even all that it needed, to start a sweeping new program of conserving and improving the soil. The answer is a matter of simple arithmetic. The total of all funds available for 1936 is around 470 million dollars. It is to be divided among the various parts of the country according to the method with Congress outlined in the Soil Conservation Act.

A share of that total will be available for payments to southern farmers who apply for soil building and soil conserving payments.

The South, more than any other region, needs such a program now. Surpluses of the other big export crops have been almost entirely removed since 1933. The cotton surplus, although greatly reduced, is still with us. Too much cotton is both hard on the soil and hard on the pocketbook of the man who raises it.

Cotton planting time is now at hand over much of the Cotton Belt. Cotton already has been planted in some sections. So what cotton planters, most of all, and other planters too, want to know is: "How can I cooperate right now in the new program?"

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We will start with the things the farmer must do to be eligible for a payment. I have already mentioned soil depleting crops, soil conserving crops, and soil building crops. You know these classifications in a general way already and you will learn them in detail later.

Soil depleting crops, of course, are those which take plant food out of the soil or leave the land exposed to severe erosion.

Soil conserving crops are the crops which hold the soil in place, and do not draw heavily on plant food in the soil; but which do not add to the fertility of the soil.

Soil building crops are crops which definitely add to the fertility of the soil. Examples would be annual legumes turned under as green manure, or perennial legumes like alfalfa.

If we keep those general classes in our minds, we can go ahead with what each farmer does. He will have base acreage figures for his soil depleting crops, including special bases for crops of particular importance to the South -- cotton, tobacco, peanuts, rice and sugar. Generally speaking, each farmer's soil depleting base will be based on the number of soil depleting acres he grew in 1935. There will be some adjustments in that base, like allowance for drought or flood conditions last year, and rented acres under the adjustment program.

The base acreage for cotton, peanuts and tobacco will be, roughly speaking, equal to the bases last year under the adjustment program, or as large as the bases would have been had the farmer applied for an adjustment contract. As I have said, there will be adjustments in these bases, too, to take care of inequities due to unusual conditions.

Rice base acreage will depend largely on the farmer's production during the years 1929 to 1933 inclusive. Sugar base acreage will depend for the most part on the farmer's facilities for producing sugar, and on his previous use of such facilities.

Two kinds of payment will be made under the program. The first kind is the soil-conserving payment. This will be paid on acres shifted in 1936 from soil-depleting crops to either soil-conserving or soil-building crops or to approved soil conserving or building practices. On all crops except the five crops with special bases, the soil conserving payment will be on an average of \$10 an acre for the United States, varying among States, counties and individual farms according to productivity of the land shifted. A farmer may receive payments for shifting up to 15 percent of his general base acreage (That excludes his base acreage for his special crops). In the Cotton Belt, he can not be paid for shifting food or feed crops raised for use on his own farm. If he usually sells the products of some food or feed crop acres, he may shift such surplus acres.

The soil-conserving payment on cotton will be 5 cents for each pound of the normal yield of the acres shifted. A farmer may receive payments for shifting up to 35 percent of his cotton base acreage. Tobacco and peanut payments also will be on a pound per acre basis.



For rice and for sugarcane for sugar, payments will be made not on the basis of shifted acreage, but on the basis of extra acreage of soil building or conserving crops in relation to the acreage of cane or rice grown.

Those are the payments for conserving soil.

A farmer is eligible for payment if he plants only soil-conserving crops on the acres taken out of soil-depleting crops. But the program puts special emphasis on building the soil. So farmers may qualify for additional payments by taking approved steps to actually improve their land, by planting soil-building crops or by approved soil-building practices. Payment for soil-building will be on a per-acre basis, the rates will vary according to the crops planted and the practices used. Those rates will be set by State committees, subject to the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture. But there is a top limit on such payments. The total cannot be more than the number of acres in soil-conserving or soil-building crops on the farm in 1936. Special provisions have been made to provide for small producers.

Farmers who qualify will be paid when the results of their year's operations can be measured. No kind of contract will be signed. The only papers will be a farm work sheet, and later an application blank.

Those are the highlights of the program. Let's take just a minute before closing and see how it would work on a sample farm. Let us say this farm has 130 acres in it. Twenty five acres are woodland. Five are space around buildings, roads and wasteland. These 30 acres are not classified as soil-depleting or soil-conserving for the purpose of calculating bases or payments. It is classified as neutral. That leaves a hundred acres. Let's say that 50 acres are normally in cotton. Twenty-five more in corn for home use -- that makes 75 acres. Ten more in small grains, also for home use, and fifteen in Lespedeza. That adds up to 100 acres in crop land.

Now another rule that I probably should have mentioned a little earlier is that no payment can be made on any farm unless that farm has in 1936 an acreage of soil-building or conserving crops equal in most cases to 20 percent of the base acreage of all soil-depleting crops.

On this hundred acres we have been talking about, 15 acres (the Lespedeza) are in a soil-conserving crop, and the other 85 acres are in soil-depleting crops. The farmer can't be paid for shifting acres from corn or the small grains because he needs them on his farm. So all he can shift is cotton. He can be paid for shifting up to 35 percent of his cotton base. If he makes the largest possible shift, that will be 17-1/2 acres. Those acres, plus the 15 already in Lespedeza bring his total of soil-building or soil-conserving crops up to 32-1/2 acres. If we say that his average cotton yield is 250 pounds per acre, his total payment will be \$218.75. That is figured by multiplying 5 cents (that's the per-pound payment) times 250 (the yield) times 17-1/2 (the number of acres).

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Now if the farmer planted the shifted acres to soil-building crops, or took other steps to improve the fertility of his land he would qualify for the additional soil-building payment. Let's say he plants a summer legume like cowpeas or soy beans and leaves the forage on the land. His state committee will set a special rate per acre for that. But whatever that rate per acre is, the total soil building on that farm can't be more than \$1.00 for each acre in soil-building or soil-conserving crops. That would make the top limit of the soil-building payment \$32.50. Add that to the \$218.75 and we get \$241.25 as the maximum payment for the operator of that farm with 100 acres of crop land.

Therefore, the scale of payments works out to about the same as farmers got under the cotton program last year -- perhaps a little higher rate per acre.

In general, that will be a safe guide for cotton farmers who want to take part in the Conservation Program, but who are not able to delay planting until they learn every small detail of the program. Their cotton bases, with the adjustments I have indicated, will be about what they were last year, and the per acre payments will be roughly the same. So if a man shifts up to 35 percent of his cotton base to soil-conserving or soil-building crops he will know that he will be eligible for payments under the 1936 program, when the time comes to make application.

In parts of the South where cotton planting cannot be delayed any longer, I advise farmers to go ahead on that basis.

I am sure that farmers in all parts of the South will cooperate fully to make the program a success. I say this because I feel the program is a sound one, fitted to the needs of individual farmers, and because my personal experience in the last three years has taught me how well the people of the South can take part in a program of cooperation aiming at the general welfare. The memory of 1933 would be enough evidence itself, without the record of advances made in the two years that followed.

The soil conservation program gives the South a chance to hold some of the gains it has made, and to push ahead with other sections of the country in a new and promising effort to improve and conserve our soil for the sake of our own generation and those which will follow us on the land.

I wish that I could state unequivocally that this program will give us the control over surpluses that we had under the adjustment programs. I can not. The Supreme Court stopped the plan we had developed to adjust supply to demand. This program is the result. And if we are to make it a success, we must have the aggressive support of the overwhelming majority of Southern farmers.

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NEW PLAN FOR MARKETING LOAN COTTON

A radio talk by Paul A. Porter, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, broadcast Tuesday, April 14, 1936, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour by WMAL and 49 other stations affiliated with the National Broadcasting Company.

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I appreciate this opportunity to bring a message of particular interest to cotton farmers. The Commodity Credit Corporation announced on April 4 with the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture and Mr. Jesse Jones, Chairman of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a plan which will enable farmers who have cotton in the 1934 12-cent loan to obtain release of their collateral and market these stocks. The forms which enable borrowers to sell their cotton have been completed and are now being sent to the field. These forms are being sent to the lending agencies of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, the County Agents, and cotton buyers. The forms and instructions contain complete information as to the mechanics of releasing this cotton.

Today I wish to emphasize three points; first, the necessity which prompted administrative action in making available a portion of the cotton impounded in the loan; second, it is desired to appeal to producers to cooperate fully in this plan; and third, to urge farmers who have cotton in the loan to exercise the same diligence in marketing it as they would if they were selling their crop.

The principal reason for releasing up to 1,000,000 bales of this cotton was to increase the consumption of American cotton for the remainder of the marketing year. World consumption of American cotton has been running at a very high rate. The Bureau of Agricultural Economics in the current "World Cotton Prospects" estimates that consumption of American cotton is likely to reach 12,300,000 bales this season if the stocks impounded in the loan are made available. It was the conclusion of the Secretary of Agriculture that the most important contribution to the welfare of cotton farmers would be to take these steps to increase the consumption of American cotton, and thus reduce the carryover next August 1. This reduction in carryover should certainly have a marked influence on the prices which will be received for the new crop.

This leads me to my second point. With the mills of the world demanding American cotton, it was considered sound administrative policy to make it available to them at world price levels. Producers who participate in this plan will be permitted to obtain a marketing commission of not to exceed \$1.25 per bale, as well as any premiums which their particular cotton may bring on account of grade, staple, and location. Therefore, those borrowers who market a portion of the cotton they have in the loan will not only obtain a compensation for so doing, but, in addition, will be making a distinct contribution for better prices for the new crop.

Finally, producers who intend to take advantage of this plan should bear in mind that the price they obtain from buyers will determine the

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amount which they will receive. It is particularly important that farmers should insist that buyers pay them the full market price and all premiums which their cotton should bring. In other words, the producer should market this cotton in the same manner that he would market his crop, because if less than the full value is paid by the buyer, the net amount which will be obtained by the producer will be less. It is desired to emphasize this point as already we have received reports that producers who have cotton in the loan are assigning their equities at less than full value. While no assignments or pledges will be recognized, producers should be entirely aware of the value of their holdings in order that private arrangements will not be made which involve a sacrifice.

Complete details of the manner in which this cotton can be released should be available this week throughout the Cotton Belt. I know that farmers are busy with their spring preparations, but it is to be hoped that all producers who have cotton in the loan will take the time to evaluate their opportunity under this plan.

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